

**MINUTES
CITY OF COCOA
DIAMOND SQUARE CRA
REGULAR MEETING
September 18, 2023**

The Regular Meeting of the Diamond Square Community Redevelopment Agency was held on September 18, 2023, at the Dr. Joe Lee Smith Community Center, 415 Stone Street, Cocoa, FL, as publicly noted.

I. **Call to Order**

Chairperson **MOORE** called the meeting to order at **6:01 pm**.

ROLL CALL:

Tracy A. Moore	Chairperson
Crystal McQueen	Vice Chairperson
Larry Brown	Agency Member
Jackie Isom	Agency Member
Ed Jones	Agency Member
Amy Robinson	Agency Member
Marilyn Smith	Agency Member
Joseph Colombo	Agency Attorney
Ryan Browne	Recording Secretary

PRESENT:

Tracy A. Moore	Chairperson
Crystal McQueen	Vice Chairperson
Larry Brown	Agency Member
Jackie Isom	Agency Member
Ed Jones	Agency Member
Amy Robinson	Agency Member
Joseph Colombo	Agency Attorney
Ryan Browne	Recording Secretary

ABSENT:

Marilyn Smith	Agency Member
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STAFF PRESENT:

City Manager WHITTEN, Community Services Director NEUTERMAN, Council Liaison GOINS were in attendance.

Invocation

Chairperson MOORE provided the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Chairperson MOORE led the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.

II. **Approval of Agenda:**

AGENDA: Regular Meeting of September 18, 2023.

***MOTION by Vice Chairperson McQUEEN; SECONDED by Agency Member BROWN to approve the agenda for the September 18, 2023 Meeting, as written.**

AYES: MOORE, McQUEEN, BROWN, ISOM, JONES, ROBINSON.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (6-0)

III. **Delegations**

1. Margie Harris – 622 South Carolina Avenue. Reported drainage issues on her street. On one side of the street from Counts Street to South Carolina Avenue, there are concrete culvers that carry water to the drains. However, on the other side of the street, from Count to Holmes, there is standing water, every time it rains. Submitted photos about a year ago to Code Compliance.
 - i. Councilman GOINS remarked that he is aware of the issue and plans to revisit it.
2. Bernice Cox – 701 Aurora Street.
 - i. There are three African American Cemeteries in Cocoa: City Point, Sharpes, and Hilltop. Many people were not aware of City Point. It was overgrown and buried in muck. She contacted County Code Enforcement who in turn contacted the owners. They in turn began to clear the area, but, with inappropriate tools, where they could have destroyed graves. She found two children's graves: Ruby Moore, born 1922, died 1924. And Leroy Moore, born 1917, died 1918. She has a list of about ten people buried in that cemetery.
 - ii. Hilltop Cemetery. Back in 1998, Mr. Patrick Clendenin, Beautification Supervisor asked her to work with him on Chairing the Hilltop Cemetery. She agreed. The City allocated time and money. And got state inmates to do the maintenance on it. It had benches, a light, and a sprinkler system. Now, it has fallen into disrepair. The City took ownership in 2000.
 - iii. Aurora Street oak trees. Public Works came out a few months ago and told her that they are only responsible to the sidewalk, but, claim the city owns

- up to the meter. All the houses on the West side of Aurora all have the oak trees up to the meter, but they would only cut to the sidewalk.
- iv. Empty houses on Aurora Street are being used by vagrants and drug users. Six vacant houses. Vagrants are camping out at a house owned by Housing for the Homeless, on the south end, by Rosa L. Jones Drive. The woman there has a blanket trespass there to Abbey Lane. They are making noises all time of night. When the young lady died in a car. Or when the 16-year-old boy died there. They came and mowed it. It's always after-the-fact with the City. For 20 years she's been asking for Hilltop Cemetery to get an entrance sign and a gate. On corner of Aurora there's a sign, but, not writing. Just need it finished. And add a light.
 - v. Councilman GOINS replied that the FY2024 budget has allocated \$88,000 for landscaping of public spaces, including cemeteries. Ms. Cox remained skeptical until she sees the actual fixes completed. She also noted that Hilltop has not been recorded as a Historic Cemetery. If it got that designation, they could get grant money for maintaining it.

IV. **Presentation:**

1. Delores McLaughlin – Briefing. Annual Report at your next meeting. Thank you for your partnership for the last 20 years. Without your support this would not be possible. Oct. 3: “National Night Out” (NNO) – for over 20 years in DSCRA (minus during COVID). Community and Police partnership. We invite everyone to come out. Focused on crime prevention and help residents learn about the organizations that support this community. We have our afterschool children program. Cocoa PAL (Police Athletic League): 3 - 5:30 PM, Monday - Thursday. New African American History curriculum Sonja started.
2. Sherry Amos – Briefing.
 - i. Director, Learning & Achievement Academy, a K-8 Private School, located at 1040 East King Street. Specialize in reading and early literacy. The LA Academy was originally started as an all-boys program because her research indicated that boys were lagging behind by 2-3 grade levels below girls and expectations. However, parents found it difficult to drop one child off at one school and then another at a different one, so in the 2019-2020 School year, they accepted girls too.
 - ii. After COVID students experienced a one-to-two year learning loss. Thus, was born the Summer Enrichment Program. During COVID students lost six months to a year of instruction. When they returned to the classroom, they had lost significant learning, which then had to be retaught during the new year, taking up to 9 weeks on instruction, just to cover lost ground. She is here to talk to us about her summer reading program, designed to address the “Summer Slide” issue, where students lose, on average, 20 percent of their learning from the previous school year. This year was the third year of program.

- iii. They need to continue so they don't lose ground. They do academics in the morning and to keep them motivated, they have activities in the afternoon, such as arts and field trips. They also provide breakfast and lunch. Our children are falling behind not only here in the States, but, also losing their global competitiveness, to China, for example. This is life skill building as well as academic. They funded out-of-pocket. They utilized iReady diagnostics software, using Pre-test and Post-test systems to compare their learning gains and keep them on-track.
- iv. They maintained a disciplined schedule: 8-9 AM: breakfast, 9 AM- 12 PM: Academic instruction; 12-1 PM: lunch; afternoons are arts and field trips. Snapshot of budget. Again, funded out-of-pocket. That is their funding request from the Diamond Square, from the City of Cocoa (see PowerPoint presentation slides).
 - 1. Chairperson MOORE: Asked if Agency Members have any questions.
 - 2. Agency Member BROWN asked: How much did you spend last summer? Answer: \$46,000. She explained where the funds went, including to transportation costs and the field trips. Many students come from disadvantaged backgrounds, so they did not have the money for transportation or field trips, so they paid for them.
 - 3. Ms. Amos explained that explained that of the 42 kids at Summer Enrichment, 20 were Diamond Square kids. We have the addresses to prove the location of the children.
 - 4. Agency Member BROWN said that this was put together really nice and that he liked it and he has no problem supporting it, at all.
 - 5. Agency Member ISOM asked if Ms. Amos is still asking for the full amount: \$15,000. Ms. Amos confirmed, yes. A lot was spend on the food for the kids, breakfast and lunch, delivered on-site by a caterer. Transportation and field trips were the other major expense. Also, the books and other curriculum for the kids.
- v. Chairperson MOORE asked if Ms. Amos had received any funding from any other sources. She replied, no. Ms. Amos said that she has been paying for this program out of their reserves. Ms. Amos said that she was going to ask for an RFP to continue the camp. Three week program.
- vi. Vice Chairperson McQUEEN question: salary on reserves. Who are you partnering with? Self-financed to this point. We have not yet had financial partnerships. Vision to expand to community-wide. Goal to stay with K-8 level. Fourth grade reading skills is how they decide how many prison cells to create. Once 8th grade is reached, students are pretty well set-in. Ms. Amos wants to remain focused on the younger students to expand this intervention to all of the needy students in our area. The vision is a passion for early literacy. Helping to fill-in the 'missing pieces' the 'building blocks.'

3. Tiffany Boyer – Briefing.

- i. New Coordinator here at JLSCC. Community feedback about our athletic programs, now offering pickleball! We have tutoring, with after school tutors from NASA. They will be having their first Block Party on October 28, 2023 from 10 AM – 2 PM. In a partnership with Brevard Prevention Coalition. And Wawa is one of our food sponsors. Please join us!
- ii. We are also offering more opportunities for people to move in the community. So, now they are offering “Soul Line dancing,” as well as Dance Fitness class with Pratt and Yolonda Martin. There are flyers on the table with our schedule. We also have lots of jobs – six positions open, throughout the Central Region of the Parks and Rec department at Brevard County. We would love to have more activities. City of Cocoa has been wonderful in providing the equipment for a computer lab.
- iii. But, we need staffing. 3-8 PM, M-R, 1-6 PM Fridays and variable Saturdays. We will work with you. We are looking for more support, not only from the city, but, also from the community. If you know some one in the community who is looking for a job, be sure to send them to her. Even, ‘seasoned’ individuals. They could use, your help, all the way to your grandchildren. Great job for a 16 or 17 year old to learn a job working for the County. We have a coffee table for our First Responders and Veterans. We have an exercise program for our Seniors. They eat lunch everyday and fellowship with one another. Please continue to support us and we will take it as far as we can go.
- iv. Agency Member BROWN asked how many DSCRA students participated in Summer Camp. Tiffany replied: 11 students. Are the residents taking advantage of the discounts in this area? Yes, with a caveat: Many would sign-up, but then not show up for whatever reason. We would like them to register earlier so that those dollars could be allocated in a more strategic way. The funds can be reallocated, but the time is gone. Mentoring is effective when we spend time with them. If they don’t show up, we can’t do that. Follow through is needed from the parents that if you sign your child up for something like a free resource, you must follow-up.
- v. Agency Member Brown asked: many adults would like to use the swimming pool on the weekends, how do we address that? Is it a staffing issue? Great question! There are some challenges, specifically, with how the pool was engineered. The system that was setup for the maintenance of the pool was a proprietary system. Which means there are very few people who can fix it. And it takes awhile to allocate the money to get the parts fixed. The staffing issue is another difficult challenge to overcome. There are no lifeguards trained. She is practically begging for anyone who knows how to swim to get certified to be a lifeguard. Pool was open only one day a week, on Sundays, from 1 PM – 5 PM. Which is now on hold, while the new equipment pieces coming in to repair the maintenance system, so the

pool can actually be operational again. She would recommend outsourcing that maintenance, getting the pool back to operational status, then focusing on the staffing issues. At this time, unable to offer pool as a consistent resource.

V. **Action Items:**

1. Approve Resolution #23-574, BAF #23-121-T to correct payroll account imbalances.
 - i. Introduction. Director NEUTERMAN presents item. \$1,177 to cover changeover costs from one Redevelopment Coordinator to another. This cleanup is part of end-of-year cleanup procedures. These are for retirement, and benefit changes.
 - ii. Discussion.
 1. MOORE: Payouts for retirement. Payroll line items for changeover.
 - iii. Vote.

***MOTION to approve Agency Member ROBINSON made the motion; SECONDED by Agency Member JONES as written.**

AYES: MOORE, McQUEEN, BROWN, ISOM, JONES, ROBINSON.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (6-0)

2. Review and Approve Proposed FY 2024 Budget.
 - a. Introduction. Director NEUTERMAN presents the item.
 - i. Contingency Fund Balance will resume at Budget Adjustment at first meeting in November.
 - ii. Close out in October.
 - iii. Cleanup adjustments with final numbers in November.
 - iv. TIF Revenue as well.
 - b. Discussion.
 - c. Vote.

***MOTION to approve Agency Member BROWN made the motion; SECONDED by Agency Member McQUEEN as written.**

AYES: MOORE, McQUEEN, BROWN, ISOM, JONES, ROBINSON.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (6-0)

3. Approve Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) with Bezos Academy.
 - a. Introduction. Director NEUTERMAN introduced the topic. Turned over to the City Manager to explain this item.
 - b. City Manager: Budget allocated for Cemeteries: \$83,000. Regular maintenance program, it's going to be outsourced. Our grants writer is looking into Historic Cemeteries.
 - c. Jeff Bezos – 501(c)3: establish Montessori Schools, free preschool for 3-5 year olds. Partner with whoever partners; renovate facilities and hire in teachers for a ten-year period. They hire and maintain teachers salaries for ten years. We not only want good education, we want that coupled with healthcare services, our health partners Space Coast Health Foundation (\$65 million endowment), Brevard Health Alliance, low-income health services. They are focused on our community. This is the first step among these five partners. Redo-or reconstruct old Dr. Joe Lee Smith – would become a combined education and health clinic. MOU: Section 7 – non-binding document. This is a partnership document. The legal documents will follow later as the details are worked out. Or build something new on that site; playground; third and fourth parcel possibly available. Brevard Health Alliance – Health Clinic. Looked into some state appropriation. Attempt to help us get BHA to help clinic establishment.
 - d. Discussion.
 - i. Chairperson MOORE asked, is this non-binding? Yes. Conversations. Not obligating money, correct? Yes. City Manager replied. Bezos Academy. Montessori particular style, for 3-5 year olds. Preschool. Tuition Free for participants, yes. Teachers paid. Build out space.
 - ii. Vice Chairperson McQUEEN: spectrum, learning disabilities. Help for them. Yes, I believe so. The teachers come from the community. Asbestos may make Old Joe Lee Smith building cost for.
 - iii. Are we looking for more than one location. At this point, this is the best location. If this is successful, looking to expand? Yes, I believe so.
 - iv. Chairperson MOORE: Great partnership – this is a great opportunity. Eagerly anticipate more details for the future.
 - v. City Manager WHITTEN, the redevelopment plan talks about affordable housing, education, and health; with Michael C. Blake subdivision, and this partnership, we can hit all three within the next two years.
 - e. Vote.

***MOTION to approve Vice Chairperson McQUEEN made the motion; SECONDED by Agency Member ROBINSON as written.**

AYES: MOORE, McQUEEN, BROWN, ISOM, JONES, ROBINSON.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (6-0)

4. Review and decide whether to approve Sherry Amos request for funds for summer reading literacy program.
 - a. Introduction. Director NEUTERMAN presents the item. Previous discussions, Agency Member BROWN had suggested \$10,000. Staff is looking for direction from the Agency on how to proceed.
 - b. Discussion.
 - i. Chairperson MOORE thinks this is an excellent program. She is concerned that only half of the children are DSCRA children, so we can only fund up to half. We are responsible for allocating funds to be spent on Diamond Square children. Is this something we want to approve?
 - ii. Agency Member BROWN asked: she mentioned an RFP. Director NEUTERMAN said, that would function similar to ANR, with benchmarks and deliverables – if she were selected.
 - iii. Chairperson MOORE said she was confused then, since she thought that tonight's request was a forward step, requesting funding for 2024, not a backwards reimbursement for 2023.
 - iv. Agency Member ISOM asked: How many DSCRA kids? Director NEUTERMAN said that we would need to get exact numbers from Ms. Amos, to be sure we've identified all DSCRA children in order to calculate the amount of funding that would be appropriate. Similar to how we get the applications for the DSCRA scholars for the Brevard County Summer Camp program.
 - v. Chairperson MOORE said she would like to see a per student breakdown of the cost of the program. So that DSCRA kids can be identified and then a per student cost can be assigned that then shows us how many kids we could afford to support. She suggested tabling this decision until they get those details. She also would like to see some of the testing results as well.
 - vi. Agency Member ROBINSON said She would like to see a breakdown of the cost for the DSCRA kids.
 - vii. Agency Attorney COLOMBO suggested just taking the total cost, and dividing out the number of Diamond Square kids, to reach a cost per kid calculation.

- viii. Director NEUTERMAN said we will work with Ms. Amos to get the exact number of youth that participated in her program, then proportion out the number of Diamond Square residents. Then bring you back the dollar amount that is proportional to the request.
- ix. Agency Member BROWN asked Ms. Amos how long it would take to get the information back to staff? She replied, probably within a week. He suggested tabling this until the October meeting.
- c. Vote. Table to October

***MOTION to approve Agency Member BROWN made the motion; SECONDED by Agency Member ROBINSON as amended.**

AYES: MOORE, McQUEEN, BROWN, ISOM, JONES, ROBINSON.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (6-0)

VI. **Attorney's Report:** None.

VII. **Updates and Staff Report**

- 1. Director NEUTERMAN:
 - i. Reminder: FRA Conference:
 - 1. Wed. Oct. 25- Fri. Oct. 27
 - 2. Any changes to attending? Please notify Ryan of any changes, asap. Any changes?
 - ii. National Night Out – flyer in your packet
- 2. Some of our partners are here tonight.
 - i. Shauna Ginn – New Executive Director of the Cocoa Housing Authority.
 - ii. Kate Delulio and Tom from Habitat for Humanity. Chairperson MOORE said that she is excited about their 3D printed house project. Shorter time because of robot – saves several weeks of framing time; exterior walls for robot only. Interior buildout will be traditional contractors.
- 3. Council Liaison GOINS: Gilmore Park (Prospect and Fern): crime, homeless, drugs, in the park, 9 months to a year problem. Date will be coming soon; at Armory, late October, four options:
 - i. Close it for maintenance.
 - ii. Close for public safety.
 - iii. Walk-up park instead of driving.
 - iv. One acre parcel. Another parcel near it 1.2 acres – create workforce housing.

v. Mr. And Mrs. Gilmore – ready to tear it down tomorrow.

1. Community discussion.
2. Agency Member ISOM: do you think shutting down the park solve the problem? Not sure. Neighborhood food garden? Water that we thought was close – no reclaim water for veggies? Nope. Fix drugs and homeless situation first. What about the Police Sub-stations in crime areas? GOINS: we can bring that to them. We will have to discuss again.
3. Shauna Ginn: Projects – 327 units. Not “projects”, derogatory term from when they began building in the 1930s - Affordable housing. Not Public Housing. Based on 30% of income – whatever that happens to be. We have to get rid of Public Housing wording. Housing Authority – we do have a small HUD but the rest is Affordable Housing.
4. Mayor; thank everyone great meeting.

VIII. **Next Meeting Date**

The next scheduled meeting of the Diamond Square Community Redevelopment Agency will be on **October 16, 2023**, at **6:00 pm** at Cocoa City Hall, 65 Stone Street, Cocoa, Florida, unless a business need arises earlier.

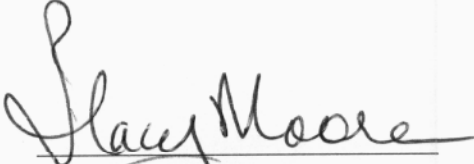
IX. **Adjournment**

***MOTION to adjourn Agency Member BROWN; SECONDED by Agency Member McQUEEN.**

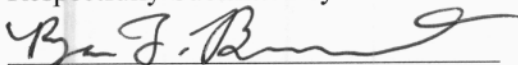
AYES: MOORE, McQUEEN, BROWN, ISOM, JONES, ROBINSON.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY (6-0)

MEETING WAS ADJOURNED at 7:30 pm.


Tracy Moore, Chairperson

Respectfully Submitted by:


Ryan Browne, Recording Secretary